

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6885

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 17054

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR, US, UK, RH

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH NKOMO

1. EMBASSY OFFICER MET OCTOBER 23 WITH JOSHUA NKOMO IN LONDON. NKOMO INITIATED THE MEETING ON THE BASIS OF CONTACTS EARLIER THIS YEAR.

2. NKOMO GOT STRAIGHT TO THE POINT. "I WANT YOU TO TELL SECRETARY KISSINGER," HE SAID "THAT THE BRITISH ROLE IN THIS AFFAIR IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH. YOU MUST GET THE BRITISH TO DO MORE." HE INSISTED THAT AN ACTIVE ROLE BY THE UK IN BOTH THE ORGANIZING CONFERENCE AND THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT IS VITAL, BUT THAT THE APPARENT BRITISH RELUCTANCE TO INVOLVE ITSELF JEOPARDIZES THE SUCCESS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS AT THE OUTSET. IVOR RICHARD IS A GOOD DIPLOMAT, HE SAID, BUT RICHARD LACKS THE STATURE AND FORCEFULNESS TO TALK TO BLACK AND WHITE REPRESENTATIVES. NKOMO BELIEVES THE CONFERENCE SHOULD BE CHAIRED BY A HIGHER LEVEL BRITISH OFFICIAL WHO SHOULD INVOLVE HIMSELF INTIMATELY IN THE DISCUSSIONS AND BARGAINING. INDICATIONS NOW ARE THAT THE BRITISH WILL ONLY CHAIR THE GENEVA SESSIONS IN A MOST FORMAL WAY, RESPONSIBLE FOR KEEPING ORDER BUT NOT ENGAGING IN SUBSTANCE OR APPEARING OTHER THAN NEUTRAL. NKOMO FEARS THAT THE CONFERENCE WILL BE A COLLECTION OF BROKEN PIECES WITHOUT ANY GLUE.

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3. WHEN ASKED ABOUT ROBERT MUGABE, NKOMO SHOWED NO CONCERN. HE SAID THAT MUGABE IS KNOWN TO THE OLD-LINE NATIONALIST LEADERS AND IS REASONABLE. HE IS COMING TO GENEVA WILLING TO TALK, BUT, NKOMO SAID RETURNING TO HIS ORIGINAL POINT, MUGABE LOOKS TO THE UK AS A GUARANTOR OF SMITH'S GOOD FAITH.

4. NKOMO SAID HE WANTED TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVE IN GENEVA. "THE BRITISH WILL TELL YOU WHAT IS GOING ON," HE EXPLAINED "BUT NOT OF THEIR OWN FAILINGS." EMBASSY OFFICER GAVE NKOMO FRANK WISNER'S NAME AND SAID WISNER WOULD LEAVE A MESSAGE AT THE INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL SAYING HOW HE COULD BE CONTACTED.

5. COMMENT: NKOMO SEEMED CONFIDENT AND SELF-ASSURED BUT OBVIOUSLY WORRIED THAT THE BRITISH WILL NOT PROVIDE THE NECESSARY CATALYST TO MAKE GENEVA WORK. HE DOUBTLESS SEES THAT AN ACTIVE BRITISH PARTICIPATION IN THE CONFERENCE WILL REINFORCE HIS OWN POSITION. OTHERWISE, NKOMO MAY BE CAUGHT BETWEEN TWO PACKS OF WOLVES. LATER IN THE DAY, COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY GENERAL RAMPHAL PHONED EMBASSY OFFICER TO SAY HE TOO HAD SEEN NKOMO AND THAT THE RHODESIAN LEADER APPEARED DETERMINED AND OPTIMISTIC.

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